

IMPACT OF TEAM BUILDING EXERCISES ON TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

“Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare” This sentence speaks a lot about the importance of Team Work and its increasing popularity and widely practiced character in industrial and business world.

Many challenging issues are being experienced in the Team Management and in ensuring teams give desired results. Prominent among them is that employees lack the basic team skills of problem solving, dealing with conflict, conducting effective meetings, and interpersonal communication.

Against these challenges, there is a belief that team building interventions can break ice amongst team members. Therefore, a research work entitled “Effect of Team Building Exercises on Team Effectiveness” has been undertaken to know the real impact which can be derived from team building exercises.

The present research work is an attempt to study the impact of team Building Exercises on team effectiveness. Major finding of this research indicates that team building exercises have positive impact on team effectiveness.

Key words: Teams, Team Effectiveness, Cohesiveness, Leadership, Conflict, Etc.

Cite This Article: Ms. Neelam Saraswat and Dr. Shilpi Khandelwal, Impact of Team Building Exercises on Team Effectiveness. *International Journal of Marketing and Human Resource Management*, 6(3), 2015, pp. 89-97.
<http://www.iaeme.com/currentissue.asp?JType=IJMHRM&VType=6&IType=3>

1. INTRODUCTION

Patrick Lencioni in his best-selling book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* (2002) has observed that “Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare.” In today’s business scenario teams have come to be considered as a central element in the functioning of organizations. The use of teams has been facilitated by a series of studies reporting the positive relationship between team-based working and the quality of products and services offered by an organization.

Since Businesses have realized that highly effective teams can positively affect the company and help them stay competitive; businesses continue to search for ways to improve teamwork through training and development. A variety of training and development techniques have been used to enhance work teams. Organizations make extensive use of teambuilding as part of growing and developing teams. Buller and Bell (1986) has remarked that “One of the most popular intervention techniques in organizational development (OD) is teambuilding.”

There is always mixed reaction when it comes to role of team building exercises in increasing team effectiveness. In order to understand the true state of affairs, the researcher has undertaken research to examine impact which team building exercises and such interventions may have on team effectiveness and as to what extent. This study is first attempt of its kind to be undertaken by the Researcher in Indian Context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

On studying various research in the field of team, it has emerged that, a team can be defined as (a) two or more individuals who (b) socially interact (face-to-face or, increasingly, virtually); (c) possess one or more common goals; (d) are brought together to perform organizationally relevant tasks; (e) exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals, and outcomes; (f) have different roles and responsibilities; and (g) are together embedded in an encompassing organizational system, with boundaries and linkages to the broader system context and task environment.

Team building is a new concept used in business circles to stimulate work teams. Its objective is to build team spirit, team synergy and to consolidate teams. The terms have been defined in many ways. As defined by Dyer, “Team building is an intervention conducted in a work unit as an action to deal with a condition (or conditions) seen as needing improvement” (Dyer, 1977, p.41). In the words of Beer, team building is a process by which members of a group diagnose how they work together and plan changes which will improve their effectiveness (Beer, 1980, p. 140).

Teambuilding can be defined as “interventions designed to improve effectiveness in working together by confronting and resolving problems” (Boss 1983: 66). Hackman and Wageman (2005: 272) refine this improvement of effectiveness to refer to “productive output”, “social processes” and “well-being of individual team members”. These three outcomes of teambuilding are enlarged by a fourth dimension, “organizational alignment” proposed by Thompson (2004: 36).

In the current study, the following definition of teambuilding was used:

Teambuilding is a specific intervention to address issues relating to the development of the team. It consists of a one (or more) day programme focused on improvement of interpersonal relations, improved productivity or better alignment of team goals with organisational goals. These interventions may have emphasis on fun and enjoyment (such as paintball, river rafting), simulation of workplace dynamics

(such as ropes courses), or problem-solving activities (indoor or outdoor experiential games), psychometric assessment to ascertain roles and personality (Gmeiner & Van Wyk 2001), adventure-based interventions as described by Kriek (2006) and Heunis (1997), and also psychodynamic interventions, notably the Tavistock approach (Cilliers 2000). Organizations utilize a variety of types of teambuilding to facilitate interventions for a variety of purposes, including improving interpersonal relationships, increasing motivation, aligning with change programmes, increasing productivity, finding direction and resolving conflict (Kriek 2007).

3. EFFECTIVENESS OF TEAM BUILDING

Views in this area are subject to tremendous diversity. Shandler and Egan's have concluded that by applying team building any group can transform itself into a high performing team. As summarized by Salas et al (1999), in their research "Overall there was no significant effect of team building on performance."

In spite of the different types and the prevalence of the application of teambuilding interventions, no clear answer on the success of team building interventions is emerging. Some claim success (Mazany, Francis & Sumich 1995), few others point to the lack of success of teambuilding (Wolff 1988; Woodman & Sherwood 1980), and some indicate that the results are elusive and inconclusive (Rushmer 1997). A number of different types of success outcomes have been studied, which includes processes (for example, communication, coordination, decision-making), team performance (for example, quality, quantity, efficiency) and affective outcomes (for example, socialisation and trust). Some of the many different objectives that can be targeted by team building interventions are improving problem-solving skills, increasing trust, enhancing leadership skills, and improving communication (Mazany, Francis, & Sumich, 1995; Williams et al., 2002). Activities that focus on group cohesion, encourages participants to share responsibility and solve problems as a group (Glass & Benshoff, 2002).

A number of factors could have possibly influenced the lack of conclusive results including:

- Difficulty in comparisons across settings and types (Offerman & Spiros 2001)
- Application of experimental rigour not satisfactorily executed (Hardy & Crace 1997; De Meuse & Liebowitz 1981)
- Methodological issues such as control, reality and certainty, as well as the difficulty of distinguishing an intervention from t

Much of the research literature indicates that the concept of team building becomes potentially, a powerful intervention for enhancing organisational performance through employee development when the circumstances of the specific team and organisational context are appropriate. (Dyer, 1977; Beer, 1976; De Meuse and Liebowitz, 1980; Adair, 1986; Woodcock 1989).

The present research work is an attempt to study the impact of team Building Exercises on team effectiveness. A Questionnaire named "TEAM Assessment Questionnaire (TAQ)" was developed for the research purpose and the same was sent to various teams in selected organizations. After collection of data at first stage, team building exercises were conducted. After one month of conduct of Team Building Exercises, Participants were again asked to fill "TEAM Assessment Questionnaire" which was given to them at initial stage.

4. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Following hypothesis were formulated keeping in mind the objectives, literature review, observation made during pilot study, and discussions with practicing managers and academicians.

Null Hypothesis Ho: Team Building exercises will have no significant impact on the effectiveness of team within companies in service sector in India.

Research Hypothesis H1: Team Building exercises (independent variables) will have significant impact on team effectiveness within companies of service sector in India (dependable variables)

Study Design: The pretest-posttest comparison with control group is used in this study. This design will compare the score of the course participants measured before the team building exercise, with a score measured after it ends. At the same time, Score was also 'measured' among the control respondents who were not attending any team building exercise during the same time period.

Sampling: Three Public Sector Banks were approached for the purpose of the study. Our sample included team members working in these organizations for more than one year. For the purpose of study, team members working in Junior, Middle and senior level and also clerical staff who are very important part of team are selected. The other set of sampling units was used to select individuals for the control group. For the study group, the selection of study participants was by **one-stage cluster sampling**. Branches in Delhi/NCR whose more than three complaints have been received from customers in preceding three month about behavioral aspects made up the clusters. Simple random sampling was then used to select some (n) clusters, all members of which are selected to be the study sample. For the control group, the selection was simple random sampling. In selected three organizations, no team building interventions were applied in past. 60 participants from each organization were selected for experiment group. Thus in total 180 participants, participated in team building exercises. Similarly total 180 participants were selected for control group (60 from each organization). All data were collected anonymously so that no individual inputs could be identified.

Data needed for this study were obtained through the use of questionnaire called "TEAM Assessment Questionnaire (TAQ)" which was developed for the purpose of the study. For the experiment and control group, the distribution of questionnaires was done through the administrative officer of each organization. The posttest questionnaires were distributed within one month of commencement of team building exercises.

5. METHODOLOGY

Statistical tests of differences are performed to compare the scores of the scales between or among the different levels of the demographic factors. This will indicate whether the differences observed are large enough to suggest actual differences in the population, or are just due to chance. The following dimensions are measured in the pre-test and posttest: Leadership, Trust & Respect, Reward & Recognition, Customer Focus, Decision making and Team Work.

6. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PRETEST AND THE POSTTEST TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

To examine whether a team building exercises has any impact on team effectiveness, measurements are made at two time points: before the programme starts (**pretest**, or **Time1**), and after it ends (**posttest**, or **Time 2**). To be able to attribute the observed differences to the training intervention, two sets of data are used. The first is the treatment data, which was collected from participants who actually attended training. The second dataset is the control data, which was collected from a similar group of participants during the study period. If the treatment data shows significant changes between the pretest and the posttest sets, and no changes are shown by the control data, then the idea that team building exercises impacts Team Effectiveness is supported. The paired samples t-test is used to test the hypothesis that the mean differences between the pretest and posttest scores are zero.

7. STATISTICS OF THE TREATMENT AND THE CONTROL DATA

Below given shows the statistics of the pretest and the posttest scores of the six subscales of the treatment data. In the rows marked as 'T1' and 'T2' are the observed means and standard deviations of the scores of the six TAQ subscales. In the row marked 'T2-T1 diff.' are the statistics of the differences between the posttest and the pre-test scores. We observe an increase in the scores of all the subscales.

Table 1 Summary statistics of the treatment TAQ subscales

		Leadership	Trust& Respect	Reward& Recognition	Customer Focus	Decision Making	Team Work	Total
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	
T1	X	17.47	21.62	16.70	18.83	17.93	19.20	111.75
	S	2.80343	2.53087	2.36100	3.08628	2.92284	3.02946	
T2	X	25.21	27.78	26.23	23.87	26.23	30.86	
	S	1.87216	1.66648	2.35372	1.67265	2.35372	2.15884	155.11
T2-T1 Diff	Mean of Diff	7.74	6.16	9.53	5.04	8.30	11.66	43.36

The data shows that reported means for the pre-test and posttest are different for all the dimensions. The total score on the pre-test and posttest showed a marked increase. The factor that featured at the higher levels in the posttest (highest meanscore) was teamwork and at the lower levels in the post-test (lowest mean) was customer focus. This may indicate an improvement in the team effectiveness for all the dimensions as well as a significant difference between pre-test and posttest scores.

The paired sample t-test was used to determine the significance level. Statistics from the hypothesis test are presented in below given tables.

Null Hypothesis Ho: Team Building exercises (independent variables) will have no significant impact on the effectiveness of team within Public Sector Banks (dependable variables).

Research Hypothesis H1: Team Building exercises (independent variables) will have significant impact on team effectiveness within Public Sector Banks (dependable variables).

The average score of the posttest Scales is different from the average score of the pretest scales, suggesting a change in the participants' perceived level of team effectiveness over the period of training. The observed scores indicate that the change is positive, an increase from the pretest to the posttest.

Table 2 Paired-sample t-test on the T2-T1 differences of the treatment data.

	Leadership	Trust & Respect	Reward & Recognition	Customer Focus	Decision Making	Team Work
T	31.663	27.306	39.476	20.545	28.572	42.228
Df	179	179	179	179	179	179
P Value	.001	.002	.007	.001	.001	.000

A significant difference was indicated in the all the dimensions. After examining the results of the paired sample t- test, it was clear that all the six dependent variables (dimensions), differed significantly statistically.

The same examination is carried out on the control data. Since the control respondents did not attend any training over the study period, there are no pretest and posttest learning scores in the actual sense. However, data was collected twice, at time points T 1 and T2, to mimic the pretest and the posttest among the study (treatment) respondents. However, for the whole of control data, a single T 1 to T2 period of one month was used. The results of the paired samples t-test in below given table show no evidence of significant differences between the scores of the two time points of any of the six TAQ sub Scales among the control respondents. This finding implies that the scores of the Six TAQ subscales do not change from time 1 to time 2. This supports the idea that the scores of SIX TAQ Sub Scale do not change among those who are not attending any training.

Table 3 Summary statistics of the Control TAQ subscales

		Leadership	Trust & Respect	Reward & Recognition	Customer Focus	Decision Making	Team Work
	n	120	120	120	120	120	120
T1	X	16.5500	21.7667	17.0667	18.1500	17.2167	18.0083
	S	3.31498	1.99156	1.87103	2.08301	2.18790	2.62021
T2	x	16.5667	21.7583	17.0583	18.2500	17.0250	18.3167
	s	3.34245	2.01145	1.88641	2.09301	2.81929	2.71909
T2-T1 Diff	Mean of Diff	.0167	.00833	-.0084	.1000	.1917	.3064

Table 4 Paired-sample t-test on the T2-T1 differences of the Control Data

	Leadership	Trust & Respect	Reward & Recognition	Customer Focus	Decision Making	Team Work
T	1.00	1.00	.976	.975	1.861	1.742
Df	119	119	119	119	119	119
P Value	.319	.319	.190	.201	.095	.083

Since significance level is above the cut-off value we have set (0.05) in all the dimensions, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and cannot accept the alternative hypothesis. There is no statistically significant difference between means of pre and post-test data of control group participants on Six Dimensions of team effectiveness.

The results of the paired samples t-test in Table show no evidence of significant differences between the scores of the two time points of any of the Six TAQ subscales among the control respondents. This finding implies that the scores of all Six TAQ subscales do not change from time 1 to time 2. This supports the idea that the scores of Team Effectiveness do not change among those who are not attending any training.

8. CONCLUSION& RECOMMENDATIONS

Analyses on the treatment data have shown evidence that all Six of TAQ subscales, have different means for time 1 (pretest) and time 2 (posttest). These findings seem to suggest that Team Building Exercises do have an impact on the scores of the all Six TAQ Sub Scales. In other words, there is an association between attending team building exercises and team effectiveness. Analyses on the control data show no significant differences between the time 1 and the time 2 scores of any of the TAQ subscales. These results support the idea that changes in the scores of TAQ Sub Scaled that we observe among the training participants can be attributed to the team building intervention they attended. Looking at the observed values, it may also be suggested that Team Building Intervention is successful in increasing Team Effectiveness.

Below given are few recommendations related to conduct of Team Building Exercises and use of Team Building Exercise sessions:

1. Team building exercises must be used only for developmental purpose. It should not be linked with any punishment for not active participation in the exercises.
2. To make team building activity live up to its true potential and to fetch maximum result out of it, it is necessary to integrate the team building with real-time work goals.
3. It is necessary to make the good feelings and the outcomes from the team building activity last beyond the final team building exercise. For this organizations must work upon their policies on the basis of feedback received from TAQ assessment.
4. The likely long-term effectiveness of a team building event is enhanced when organizations incorporate annual team building events into an overall company structure.
5. Proper designing of team building intervention and also its proper conduct is necessary. Poorly designed team building exercises may lead on failure of team building interventions and also team structure.
6. After team building exercises, there are likely chances that people will go back to their old ways of doing things once they go back to the office. Teams need support to build their strength gradually to change deep-rooted systems effectively.
7. After the onetime event, there should be follow up workshops. To have a successful team building process, the workshops should be well planned.
8. Team building should result in actionable ideas to help the team and the organization achieve their goals. Continued learning and reinforcement are necessities.

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